

# Module

# 5

## Inquiry in the Content Areas

**Estimated Time: 1 hour**

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The goal of this module is to introduce participants to the power of inquiry as a tool for engaging students in their own learning. Participants will explore a gradual release model for introducing their students to inquiry and explore the shifts in thinking and practice that must be made for a successful transition to an inquiry-based classroom.

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### Materials You Will Need:

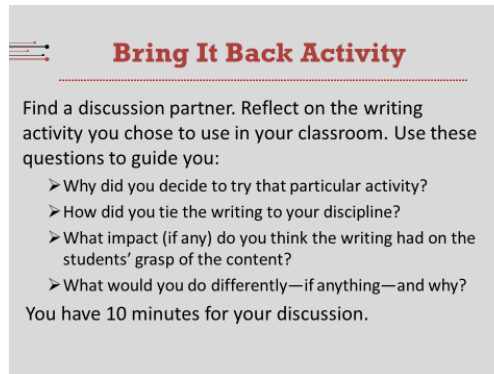
- Chart paper
- Markers
- PowerPoint Slides **5.1-5.13**
- A piece of chart paper divided in half vertically (T-chart) with the left-hand column labeled *I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about using writing in the classroom* and the right-hand column headed *because....*
- A piece of chart paper headed *Curiosity leads to....*
- **Handout 1:** Banchi and Bell's Four Levels of Inquiry
- **Handout 2:** Shifts for Implementing Inquiry in the Disciplines
- Paper and pens/pencils for participants (optional)
- Highlighters for participants (optional)

## Overview of the Session: All times are approximate.

- SEGMENT 1: Reflecting on the Bring It Back Activity (Approximately 15 minutes)
- SEGMENT 2: Establishing the Purpose of the Session (Approximately 5 minutes)
- SEGMENT 3: The Reason for Inquiry (Approximately 15 minutes)
- SEGMENT 4: The Shift to Inquiry-Based Learning (Approximately 20 minutes)
- BRING IT BACK ASSIGNMENT (Approximately 5 minutes)

### ➤ **SEGMENT 1: Approximately 15 minutes** **Reflecting on the Bring It Back Activity**

- A.** Project PowerPoint Slide 5.2 about 5 minutes before the scheduled start time.



The image shows a PowerPoint slide with a grey background. At the top left, there are three horizontal lines with a right-pointing arrow. The title "Bring It Back Activity" is centered at the top in a bold, dark red font. Below the title, the text reads: "Find a discussion partner. Reflect on the writing activity you chose to use in your classroom. Use these questions to guide you:". This is followed by four bullet points, each starting with a right-pointing arrow: "> Why did you decide to try that particular activity?", "> How did you tie the writing to your discipline?", "> What impact (if any) do you think the writing had on the students' grasp of the content?", and "> What would you do differently—if anything—and why?". At the bottom of the slide, it says "You have 10 minutes for your discussion."

- B.** Prompt participants to begin their conversations at the scheduled start time.
- C.** As the discussions begin, post the chart paper headed *I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about writing in the classroom/because...*
- D.** At the end of **5 minutes**, remind the group that both partners should discuss their lessons.
- E.** Walk the room during the discussions, answering questions and coaching as needed.
- F.** At the end of another 5 minutes, ask participants to draw their thoughts to a close.
- G.** Ask volunteers to fill in the blanks in the columns on the T-chart. Answer questions and coach as needed.

➤ **SEGMENT 2: Approximately 5 minutes**  
**Establishing the Purpose of the Session**

A. Project PowerPoint Slide 5.3.

☰: **Objectives for the Day**

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Participants will—

- examine the link between curiosity and inquiry.
- be introduced to the four levels of inquiry.
- consider the shifts that must be made to move from a transmission to an inquiry-based model of learning.

5.3

B. Go over the objectives for the session.

➤ **SEGMENT 3: Approximately 15 minutes**  
**The Reason for Inquiry**


A. Project PowerPoint Slide 5.4.

☰: **Do You Remember?**

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As you may remember, Albert Einstein said,

**“It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.”**



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B. Remind the participants that they responded to the quote in the last session.

C. Project PowerPoint Slide 5.5.

☰: **Think about It**

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Remember a time when you were curious about something.



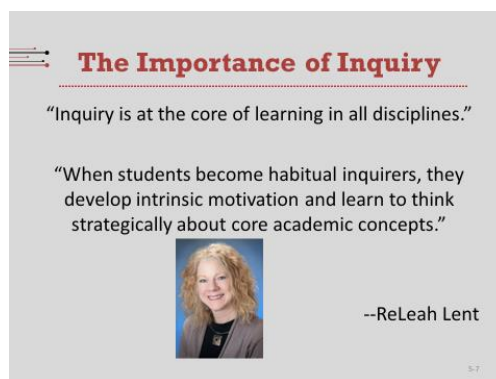
❖ About what were you curious?  
❖ What did you do as a result of your curiosity?

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- D. Direct participants to think about the two questions for a minute.
- E. After a minute, ask participants to share their thoughts in response to the questions with others at their tables.
- F. Give participants about 5 minutes for their discussions.
- G. While the participants discuss, post the chart paper headed *Curiosity leads to....*
- H. After posting the chart paper, walk through the room listening in on discussions, answering questions, and coaching as needed.
- I. At the end of five minutes, ask volunteers to complete the statement *Curiosity leads to....*
- J. Chart their responses.
- K. After charting the responses, ask this questions: **What if I added one word to the sentence stem: Intellectual.**
- L. Project animated **PowerPoint Slide 5.6.**




- M. Only the sentence stem and picture will appear initially. Ask volunteers to fill in the blank in the sentence stem.
- N. After taking a few suggestions, a mouse click will display the word *inquiry*.
- O. Explain that the rest of this session and all of the next session will focus on inquiry-based learning, which must begin with students' interest in and curiosity about the content.
- P. Project **PowerPoint slide 5.7.**



- Q.** Go over the points on the slide, stressing the role inquiry plays in developing intrinsic motivation.
- R.** Project **PowerPoint slide 5.8.**

**And One More Good Thing**

Releah Lent points out that “...teachers who focus heavily on inquiry-based instruction had students who significantly outperformed students who had had traditional instruction.”



So, let's make Einstein happy and support curiosity by providing inquiry-based instruction for our students.

5-8


- S.** Clearly make the point that shifting to inquiry-based instruction will result not only in more engaged students—but also in students who outperform those taught in a more traditional way.

➤ **SEGMENT 4: Approximately 20 minutes**

## **The Shift to Inquiry-Based Learning**

- A.** Project **PowerPoint Slide 5.9.**

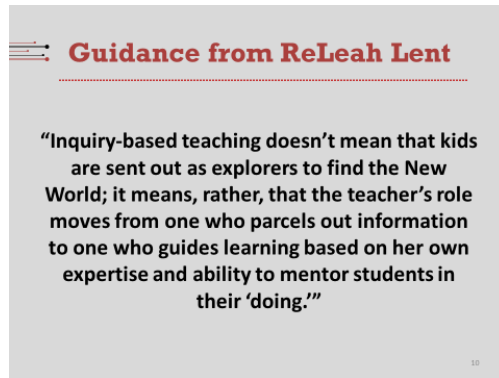
**The Inquiry Balancing Act**

<p>The <b>student</b>-- can't construct meaningful questions if they lack background knowledge or basic information on the topic.</p>		<p>The <b>teacher</b>-- must provide enough information to ignite inquiry without giving so much information that curiosity is doused.</p>
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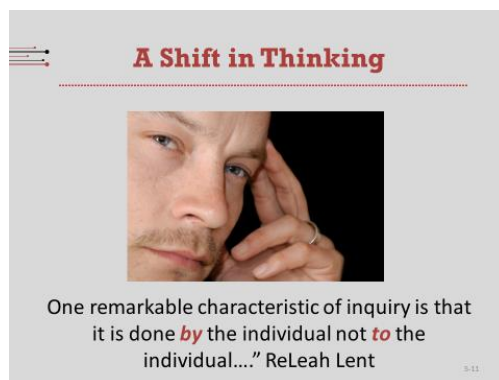
5-9

- B.** Be sure participants understand that the teacher still has to *teach* some basics, but always with an eye to how the teaching of that information can spark curiosity and lead students on a journey of discovery.

C. Project PowerPoint Slide 5.10.

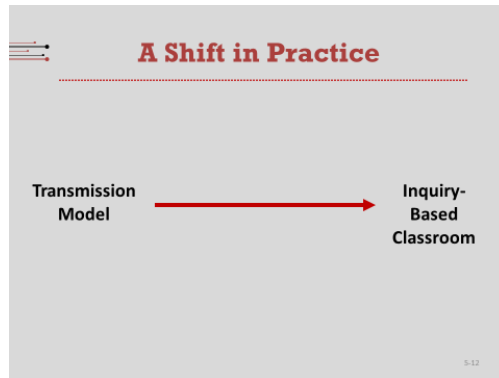


- D. Clearly explain that inquiry-based instruction is not a free for all. The teacher is still covering the required curriculum—but doing so in a way that is more engaging to the students and that puts them in the center of their own learning.
- E. Explain that there are basically four levels of inquiry, each level allowing students more independence than the one before it.
- F. **Distribute Handout 1: Banchi & Bell’s Four Levels of Inquiry.**
- G. Go over the four levels, pointing out that this is actually a gradual release model for instruction—the teacher assumes less and less of the responsibility at each level. Students should *not* be thrown into the fourth level (open inquiry) unless they’ve first experienced the other levels and have enough background knowledge to generate effective inquiry questions.
- H. Project PowerPoint Slide 5.11.



- I. Be sure participants understand that the purpose of inquiry-based instruction is to have students learn not only content but skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. The work must be done *by* the students as they learn how to locate, generate, and utilize new information.

**J.** Project **PowerPoint Slide 5.12.**



- K.** Make the point that if we are to engage students by having them function much like experts in our chosen field, we have to move to a more inquiry-based classroom—because the “experts” are continually inquiring, seeking to know more about the disciplines they love.
- L.** Distribute **Handout 2: Shifts for Implementing Inquiry in the Disciplines.**
- M.** Go over the points on the handout.

➤ **Bring It Back Task: Approximately 5 minutes**

**A.** Project **PowerPoint Slide 5.13.**

The slide is titled "Bring It Back Task" in red text. Below the title, there is a blue link: "Read [from beginning of Chapter 4 to end of the FAQ's—right before How to get Students Inquiring...](#)". Below this is a paragraph: "This section of the text should relieve any anxiety you have about an inquiry-based classroom because it builds on the ideas we've discussed today and gives specific examples from each discipline." At the bottom, another paragraph reads: "While reading, jot notes about your reactions to the ideas presented. We will discuss them at the next session." The slide has a light gray background and a small "5-13" in the bottom right corner.

- B.** Go over the assignment, encouraging participants to be honest in their reactions.